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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0289
RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 CASABLANCA 000073

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/FPP - SEXTON, CA/VO/F/P, NEA/MAG, PRM
DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC FOR FPM JSCHOOLS
DAMASCUS FOR RCO HICKEY
POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGER

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - CASABLANCA

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11. SUMMARY: All consular operations for Morocco are located at Casablanca, which is a medium-fraud post where the impact is greater on Immigrant Visas (IV) than on Nonimmigrant Visas (NIV). Post's FPU consists of a (part-time vice consul FPM and one FSN Fraud Investigator (FSN/FI). The majority of visa applicants are Moroccan--some dual nationals with European or Canadian passports. Post also sees a small number of third-country nationals from francophone West Africa and several Arabic speaking countries.

DV fraud consists of occasional fraudulent educational documents or fraudulent claims to perform qualified jobs. Fraudulent relationships are seen in both DV and IV cases, making up the majority of fraud that post sees. Post has also seen an increase in IV workload and fraud, many in cases involving internet relationships. Post has not discovered serious fraud trends among NIV applications--other than bogus work, bank, or salary statements which are easily detected on the line due to their poor quality.
END SUMMARY.

1A. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Morocco has long porous borders and an extensive coastline. Demographic and economic conditions continue to provide fertile ground for fraud as the young unemployed seek better opportunities in the industrialized West. Approximately thirty percent of all college undergraduates are unemployed or underemployed. In addition, Morocco's geographic proximity to Western Europe has historically made it a convenient embarkation point for smugglers and narcotics traffickers. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, along the Mediterranean coast and the relative proximity of the Spanish Canary Islands further exacerbates the allure for illegal immigrants, making Europe an easier and less expensive target for illegal migration than the United States.

With Moroccan nationals having been convicted of organizing terrorist activities and attacks in Morocco and in third countries, Morocco is a "country of concern" under the Department of Homeland Security's Visa Security Program.

The relationship between post and the Interior Ministry and Police infrastructure is positive. FPU works closely with state-owned Royal Air Maroc (RAM) and Moroccan immigration authorities when the authenticity of a U.S. travel document is in question. RAM

officials and immigration officials at Casablanca's Mohammed V airport have been particularly vigilant and effective in detecting visa fraud and contacting post. These cases mostly involve West African nationals attempting to transit to the U.S.

The fraud level is low in obtaining Moroccan passports, birth certificates and national identification cards from official sources. The Moroccan authorities take identification fraud very seriously. Any official corruption related to providing false identification is prosecuted aggressively, with punishments for falsifying a Moroccan national identification card ranging to a maximum 5 years imprisonment. This also holds true for educational documents from official government sources as noted in the DV fraud section below.

The passport and registry offices process passport applications carefully but slowly. This process takes at least 6 months for the Moroccan police and passport authorities to investigate each case. Due to this delay, bribery of local officials to place one's passport application in the front of the queue for commune review, a police investigation, or printing is a very common form of corruption. To our knowledge, however, bribery related to altering identities in a passport is rare due to the severe legal ramifications.

B. NIV FRAUD: NIV fraud generally involves false work documents, fake or inflated bank account information and disinformation about pertinent 214(b) details. Normally these situations are handled at the window, although the FSN/FI will occasionally use online checks with tax authorities or call an employer to verify the applicant's claims. Fraudulent documents often contain grammatical and typographical errors and lack the required tax authority number. Even stationery from legitimate businesses tends to look unprofessional, so post often looks more closely at bank statements, which are more difficult to falsify.

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The major Moroccan-American communities in the U.S. are in the Washington D.C., Boston, Orlando, and New York areas, with growing communities in the Denver, Los Angeles and Houston areas. Applicants for those destinations who claim no acquaintances in the U.S. are likely to be concealing friends and family members who may have overstayed visas.

In addition, post processes a number of Q-1 visas for young Moroccans to work for a year at the Marrakech restaurant in the Epcot Center at Disney World in Florida. Return rates traditionally had been very poor. In recent years, however, post has worked closely with the local American representative from the Walt Disney Corporation to implement new standards for potential applicants. These include requiring enrollment in one of Morocco's many tourism schools, internship experience in the hospitality industry, an intermediate ability to speak English, and a preference for applicants without relatives in the U.S.

C. IV FRAUD: Post has seen a continued increase in the number of sham marriages in Fiance(e)(K) and Spouse (IR-1 or CR-1) cases--often, but not always, relationships that have begun via the Internet. Usually these involve older American women and young unemployed Moroccan men with relatives in the U.S. The American woman petitioner is generally 8-20 years older than the beneficiary, does not speak French or Arabic, has little or no travel outside the U.S., and met the beneficiary--who speaks little or no English--online or via his relative in the U.S. Often the only time the two have actually met is when the petitioner traveled to Morocco for an engagement ceremony and/or marriage. Rarely do they return to Morocco after a short visit to "get married."

In such cases, fraud is easiest to identify where the applicant cannot conduct the interview in English, cannot provide basic personal information about the petitioner such as the place of work or residence, and cannot produce evidence of the petitioner's trip to Morocco or their ongoing communication. Another indicator of possible fraud is the nature of the engagement and/or wedding ceremony photos submitted. Even in poorer Moroccan communities, if

genuine, both occasions are marked by large multifaceted ceremonies involving dozens of family members and friends, with several meals served and elaborate decorations and clothing. A hastily-taken picture of a few relatives and the betrothed couple sitting in a living room or restaurant frequently alert the interviewing officer that the relationship requires further investigation.

D. DV FRAUD: Post has seen a dramatic decline in DV fraud as far as qualifications are concerned. The main area for fraud in DVs is now in questionable relationship for recently added DV-2s.

E. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: Post has not identified any cases of ACS or Passport Fraud during the past year. Post has seen a few cases where the parents claim not to be married, but have a child with a birth certificate naming both parents. Such documents are not issued unless the couple is married. These few cases do not affect transmission of citizenship, but may reflect attempts to conceal a Moroccan wife when the now-Amcit husband was involved in a sham marriage to an Amcit to obtain citizenship.

F. ADOPTION FRAUD: Post has not had any adoption cases in the past year and has no associated fraud to report.

G. ASLYUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD: Post encountered one incident towards the end of the year of asylee fraud. A Moroccan who had falsely obtained asylee status seven years ago under the claim that he was a Kurdish-Iraqi was detained at the Casablanca airport upon arrival.

H. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: The FPU and RSO have extensive contacts and a generally positive relationship with several Ministries in the Government of Morocco. The FPU coordinates the verification of Moroccan and American travel documents with the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for all urban police services, immigration and customs. This includes verifying suspect LPR credentials and/or visas presented by West African nationals transiting Morocco to the U.S. via RAM's direct flight to New York. In addition, immigration authorities at Morocco's airports will verify if and when a traveler entered or

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left Morocco.

The FPU also verifies Moroccan birth certificates forwarded by post's visa units and other USG agencies such as DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents investigating immigration violations with the Ministry of the Interior. The same office is also helps our ACS unit following up welfare/whereabouts and other inquiries. Finally, the FPU verifies police certificates and possible wanted persons in Morocco with the National Security Directorate, the bureau of the Ministry of the Interior responsible for all police operations in Morocco's cities.

As noted above, the FPU also works closely with the Ministry of Justice to verify Moroccan marriage and divorce certificates at the request of the visa units. This entails calling the court at which the certificate was issued and requesting their verification. In most cases, the court will issue a formal letter or an official note through the Ministry of Justice verifying the result. This has been particularly useful in combating sham DV and IV marriages.

The FPU continues to maintain a long-standing relationship with government-owned RAM airline. In many circumstances, it is actually a RAM representative that identifies a passenger bearing a fraudulent US or Moroccan travel document and notifies the immigration or police authorities at the airport.

After the May 16, 2003 Casablanca bombings, the Moroccan Parliament passed a new terrorism law that significantly increased the penalties for forgeries and the fraudulent production of government and private documents. The punishments are most serious for government documents, such as passports, national identification cards, and police and educational certificates, with the penalties ranging from a minimum six month jail term to 5 years for serious offenses. For private documents, punishments range from 6 months to two years, depending on the harm done with the fraudulent documents.

These crimes and visa fraud are prosecuted by the Moroccan authorities, as all individuals referred to the police by the FPU were sentenced to at least a six-month prison term.

I. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: The number of suspect and actual sham relationships continues to rise on the IV line. These include inter-family relationships, such as marriage to a first cousin and Internet relationships. While first-cousin marriages are culturally accepted in Morocco, it is rare that the beneficiary can provide evidence of a non-familial relationship with the petitioner. The workload volume on IV relationship cases has increased since 2005 with IR-1 numbers up 48%, CR-1 numbers up 3.4%, and K-1 numbers up 44%.

K-3 numbers have declined; however post attributes this decline to processing issues--CR/IR-1s were arriving at post before K-3s in several instances--and other forms of fraud. Additionally, anecdotal evidence from current IV applicants and American Citizen petitioners at post indicates that numerous previous K-1 recipients were actually already married to the petitioner, but using the K-1 to get to the U.S. quicker. Thus, post began this year to require official confirmation of the beneficiary's singlehood--a certificate issued by Moroccan authorities.

J. STAFFING AND TRAINING: The FPU consists of a single FSN Fraud Investigator (FI) and an FPM vice consul who also serves as the ACS Chief. In addition to general NIV and ACS training, the FI has attended regional fraud prevention courses at Nicosia in 1996, Rome in 1999, and FSI in 2007. Morocco remains in the top ten countries worldwide for Diversity Visa entrants. As a result, demand for the FSN/FI's knowledgeable, fraud-related interpretation assistance on the visa line is increasingly occupying his time. In addition, due to his experience, he backs up most FSN positions in the section.

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